



AMERICAN BOARD OF TOXICOLOGY

Newsletter

Fall 2008

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President's Message

Well, it has been a very interesting four years, and much has been accomplished by the dedicated members of the Board. Most important has been the overhaul of the examination itself. We now have a much improved certification examination. We have also improved the format and content of recertification examination questions: much of the improvements in both exams due, in no small part, to purging the exam database of many questions that were simply not up to the standards we now apply. Which leads to another point the Board has begun to emphasize: the quality of submitted exam questions. We simply will not accept questions that are poorly constructed, lack adequate references for answers, or appear to have been "thrown together" without much thought or preparation. Remember: ultimately the exam can only be as good as the questions submitted, and you as Diplomates share in this responsibility.

Another important change in business has been the re-tooling of the recertification process. Thanks to the persistence and leadership of Adam Woolley, we now have a template for keeping track of continuing education, a scoring system that is more objective in supporting recertification standards, and much needed clarification on what those standards are. The amount of work put into this effort was amazing, but the product is well worth it, and the folks who accomplished this deserve our gratitude.

Another important initiative is planned enhancements to the ABT website. Thanks to Fred Kirchner and John Lipscomb, working with Susie Masten, we have identified a vendor we feel comfortable with and who we believe will produce a useful, user friendly online service. You will be kept informed as we add online payment processing and other features to the website.

Finally, some news on the international front. You may already know that Peter McAnulty is retiring as our European Liaison. He has been a terrific resource for us over the years and we are grateful for his service. He has been working with Adam Woolley to make the transfer of responsibility smooth, and we really appreciate his effort in this as well. Adam will be assuming this job beginning in 2009, and the exam site for Europe will be in Edinburgh. As many of you have undoubtedly heard through the grapevine, we are exploring with Dr. K.S. Rao offering the exam in India. Current intention is to do this for the first time in the fall of 2009, in Bangalore. We are working with KS to make this possible and will keep you informed on the progress of this initiative.

Finally, to all who are interested in serving on the Board: do not be bashful! If you have volunteered before but were not selected, please do not take this as a rejection based on merit. We are very careful in selecting members, based on many factors, such as area of expertise. Serving on the Board is an honor and a privilege. Good luck to all and stay tuned on issues like the website and India.

Ken Hastings
President

Certification 2008

It was another big year for applications. ABT received 176 applications for the 2008 Certification Examination. The exam was given on October 10-11, 2008, in North Carolina, California, and Scotland. New Diplomates will be announced in the Spring newsletter.

Recertification Changes

The recertification process can morph into an onerous task, as many of you can understand. The ABT's Recertification Committee feels your pain, and we have developed a system that will assist you in selecting and documenting continuing education and continuing professional development (CE/CPD) activities. There were two drivers for this advance. First, many of you are incredibly active and are over-achievers undertaking and documenting a more-than-expected amount of CE/CPD activities annually – these activities take an inordinate amount of time to document and to evaluate. Second, the Recertification committee felt that a more objective and transparent system would avoid misunderstandings and reduce the need for follow-up clarifying communication.

The ABT's Board of Directors has approved the establishment of a point-based system for CE/CPD activities, has segregated activities into categories and has established minimum standards for recertification. This represents no change to prior levels of expectations; it merely establishes a mechanism to collect and evaluate activities. The development of this system was done after an analysis of ABT CE/CPD goals, the study of a fair number of recertification applications, and a review of practices of similar organizations. Two files (MS Word instructional document and corresponding Excel spreadsheet file) that state our intent and guide the organization and documentation of CE/CPD activities are posted on the website (www.abtox.org) under the recertification area.

While the ABT continues to maintain high expectations for CE/CPD, the establishment of minimum standards will help Diplomates concentrate on specific types of activities to maintain a balance and appropriate level of activity among CE/CPD activities. Documentation of activities (e.g., Society-sponsored continuing education courses) will remain a key part of the recertification package. Diplomates are reminded that CE/CPD activities are those that are NOT part of routine job duties. The scoring system exemplified in the excel spreadsheet serves two advantages. First, it will allow recertifying Diplomates to see where their activities stand relative to the minimum score of 20 points per year. Second, it will allow the Recertification Committee to evaluate CE/CPD activities more rapidly and with an even higher level of objectivity.

In the future, ABT recertification materials must continue to contain a list of CE/CPD activities documented as before. Recertification materials must also include a copy of the excel spreadsheet that identifies activities cross-referenced to the textual descriptions and assigns points for specific activities.

As with any newly-established policy, some fine-tuning may be expected. The ABT will enact this policy in stages, with the spreadsheet optional (but highly recommended) for Diplomates submitting recertification packages in 2009. The system will become mandatory for Diplomates submitting recertification packages in 2010, but strict adherence to the 20-point minimum standard for years before 2009 would be unfair. After your careful review, the Recertification Committee would appreciate your comments toward improving this new system. Please direct them to info@abtox.org.

Replacement Certificates – Requests Due December 1

As announced in the last newsletter, certificates will now be ordered only once per year, in December. If you need a replacement certificate, the cost is cost \$20.00. Requests and payment for a replacement certificate must be received by December 1, 2008 to be ordered this year. Of course, if a Diplomate needs verification of certification status at other times of the year, the ABT office will be happy to provide a letter of attesting to certification.

Classes of 1985/1990/1995/2000/2005 to Recertify

In February of 2009, Diplomates who were originally certified in 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, and 2005 will be mailed recertification packets. If you do not receive yours by March 1, 2009, please contact the ABT office. It is the responsibility of the Diplomate to ensure that we have a current address on file. ABT cannot be responsible for lost or undelivered mail. Applications for recertification postmarked after March 31, 2009 will be charged a \$150 late fee.

2009 Directory of Diplomates

Address updates for the 2009 downloadable Directory of Diplomates must be received by December 31, 2008. Please be aware that there are two “directories” on the ABT website. One is the searchable directory. These entries are the ones Diplomates can update themselves at any time throughout the year. There is also the downloadable Directory of Diplomates, which is a .pdf file. The downloadable directory lists Diplomates alphabetically, as well as geographically. This directory is only updated once per year.

Nominations for New Board Members

Diplomates are invited to nominate themselves or a fellow Diplomate for the three seats on the Board of Directors becoming vacant in April, 2009. For effective Diplomate representation, ABT tries to maintain a balance between academia, government, and industry. In addition, heavy emphasis is placed upon areas of expertise in relation to the current Board makeup in order to have as comprehensive a representation as possible. If you have previously submitted your CV, and were not selected, please consider re-submitting as the needs of the Board change each year.

Please be aware that Directors become part of a working Board. Members participate in three Board meetings per year, (including one mandatory week in July of each year) and one or more committee meetings, as well as proctoring the certification examination in October and helping to man the ABT booth at the SOT meeting. In addition, Board members devote extensive outside review time to examination preparation. If you are interested, and have completed at least one recertification, email your curriculum vitae to info@abtox.org. You may also mail your curriculum vitae to the office. Names of those being nominated, or CVs in the case of self-nominations, must be received by December 15, 2008 to be considered for the March 2009 elections. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the ABT office.

ABT 30th Anniversary In 2009

Next year will mark 30 years since ABT was incorporated in 1979. Through the years, ABT has continued to grow steadily. Please join us at our annual mixer meeting at SOT in Baltimore for a special celebration!! Details will be announced in the next newsletter.

In Memoriam

George M. Szczech Class of 1981

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